



Petition Period Opens for 2015 Ag Enterprise Areas

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Editors note: Although the petition deadline is not until April 30, 2015, the petitions typically require months to prepare.

MADISON – Wisconsin landowners and their local governments can now petition to have an Agricultural Enterprise Area designated in 2015.

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are blocks of land that are primarily in agricultural use, either for farming or for businesses that serve the farming sector. They are created when at least five landowners and the local government petition the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the department approves the designation.

AEA designation does not limit land use within the area, or protect it from development. It does allow farmers within the AEA to receive tax credits of \$5-\$10 per acre if they enter farmland preservation agreements with the department. The designation can also be used with local planning and zoning, conservation easements, ag economic development incentives and other tools to support farming and the local farm economy.

“Farmers and agribusinesses need some certainty that their ag infrastructure is going to be around for the future, so they can feel confident investing in their businesses,” said John Petty, Administrator of DATCP’s Agricultural Resource Management Division, which houses the AEA program. “AEAs can provide some of that certainty. They’re a tool to help preserve and build rural communities. They allow for a broad range of actions that local governments can take to maintain a farming base for their economies.”

Petition materials, including detailed instructions and petition forms, are available online at <http://datcp.wi.gov>, search for “petition materials”. Completed petitions are due April 30, 2015. Petitions must be completed jointly by local landowners and local government officials. Prospective petitioners should notify the department of their intent to apply, so they can receive announcements of workshops or webinars to help them prepare their petitions.

When AEAs designated this year take effect on Jan. 1, Wisconsin will have 29 AEAs totaling 940,000 in 22 counties, 85 towns and the Bad River Reservation. The department has authority to designate up to 2 million acres in AEAs.

For more information, farmers and local government officials should call Coreen Fallat at 608-224-4625 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

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